



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 26, 2010**

House Bill 5541, An Act Concerning Jury Service and Selection

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch in opposition to *House Bill 5541, An Act Concerning Jury Service and Selection*. This bill creates jury exemptions for college students and small business owners, excludes non-citizens who are already excluded from jury service, and unnecessarily requires that the Jury Administrator summon jurors to a court location that is within their judicial district.

By way of background, in 1983 the General Assembly endorsed the principle that the jury pool should be as broad as possible by eliminating categorical exemptions to jury service, with very few exceptions. This practice is in keeping with standards put forth by the American Bar Association. In their commentary on jury service, the ABA notes, "... [B]road categorical exceptions not only reduce the inclusiveness and representativeness of a jury panel, but also place a disproportionate burden on those who are not exempt." The ABA re-affirmed this position in their 2005 statement, "Principles for Juries and Jury Trials".

We believe that a blanket exemption for post-secondary students, while in school, and small business owners, would open the door for other groups of individuals to seek an exemption. This would have a detrimental impact on the diversity of the jury pool, and create the unfortunate perception that one citizen's time is worth more than another's time.

In addition, it must be noted that individuals summoned for jury service may postpone their service to any weekday of their choosing within a year of the day that they are summoned. In the case of out-of-state students, they may schedule their jury service for a period of time when they will be in Connecticut, such as the summer. If they will not be in Connecticut at all during a particular year, or will only be in the state for a very short period of time, the student will be excused by the Jury Administrator for an extreme hardship.

In regards to sections 2 and 3, which state that a juror shall be summoned for jury service in a judicial district that includes the town, or a portion thereof, in which he or she resides, we would respectfully suggest that this is unnecessary. Every juror summoned is sent to a courthouse within their judicial district. Furthermore, if the person moves out of the judicial district, or one is summoned and the town is subsequently moved to another judicial district, the juror is disqualified.

Jury administrators appreciate the time and commitment required of those summoned for jury service, but respectfully suggest that this bill will jeopardize the diversity of the jury pool when less detrimental remedies already exist.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to this bill.